



**A few words
from State
Superintendent
of Schools
Lillian M.
Lowery**

Congratulations to Maryland Teacher of the Year Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship, named last week as one of four finalists for 2013 National Teacher of the Year.

Rhonda is an English teacher at Rising Sun High School in Cecil County. She will be competing against teachers from Florida, New Hampshire, and Washington for the national honor. This prestigious program, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers, allows teachers from across the country to collaborate with policy makers at every level and advocate on behalf of the teaching profession.

We don't know if Rhonda will receive the award, but we already know she's a winner. She's a terrific classroom teacher who challenges and respects her students. Rhonda is a shining example of Maryland's outstanding educator workforce. That workforce—teachers and administrators—are the reason Maryland is ranked number one in the nation. (For more about that, see the accompanying article.)

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It takes great teachers and leaders for our schools to improve. One such leader who contributes to improving our schools every day is Dr. S. James Gates, who serves as a member of the State Board of Education, and as a professor of physics at the



Dr. S. James Gates is honored by Governor O'Malley for his being named a recipient of the National Medal of Science.

MOVING TOWARD NEW PROTECTIONS FOR ATHLETES

The Maryland State Board of Education is seeking to strengthen protections for student-athletes by making permanent the emergency regulations put in place last fall requiring training for coaches in the area of brain injuries.



Dr. Gary Dix discusses the importance of safety for student-athletes.

In action this week, Board members proposed amending the current regulations in order to provide enhanced protection for athletes. When the regulations are finalized, they will require refresher concussion training for coaches on a biennial basis; require concussion training for physical education teachers; and make certain that local school systems implement policies to ensure appropriate academic accommodations, documented oral and written notification to parents, and timely notification to athletic directors and school nurses of student-athletes who have sustained a suspected concussion.

The proposed regulations also identify the healthcare providers authorized to return a student-athlete to play after a suspected concussion, in an attempt to ensure that the provider has had the proper training for concussion treatment and management. The proposed regulations would direct the Maryland State Department of Education—in collaboration with medical, academic, and athletic advisors—to identify collision, contact, and non-contact sports, and recommend limitations of contact to reduce risk.

The Board will publish the revised proposal in the *Maryland Register* in the coming weeks. The State Board's work on the issue has been informed by the work of the Traumatic Brain Injury/Sports-Related

University of Maryland is in the midst of his 40th year of teaching.

John Ratliff, right, Director of Policy for the Governor, presented the citation this week on the Governor's behalf.

We claim Dr. Gates as our own, but the fact is we share him with the nation. President Obama this month announced Dr. Gates is one of the 2013 recipients of the National Medal of Science. The award will be presented in the coming weeks.

This is what the President said in announcing this year's honorees: "They represent the ingenuity and imagination that has long made this Nation great—and they remind us of the enormous impact a few good ideas can have when these creative qualities are unleashed in an entrepreneurial environment."

Dr. Gates—Jim as he prefers to be called—is just such an individual. We appreciate his service to Maryland students, in both K-12 and higher education.

Maryland this month added 207 new Nationally Board Certified Teachers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has now certified more than 2,400 Maryland teachers with the profession's top recognition.

This year's total was 9th among states, and Maryland's overall total ranks 13th in the nation. Over the past five years, Maryland's number of Nationally Board Certified Teachers has more than doubled, one of just 11 states to grow at that rate.

National Board Certification, a voluntary program established by NBPTS, is achieved through a performance-based assessment that typically takes more than a year to complete. It is designed to measure what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The process requires teachers to demonstrate how their activities, both inside and outside the classroom, strengthen student performance and contribute to student achievement.

Maryland has long been supportive of NBPTS and its goals, working with the National Board since 1997.

Please join me in welcoming a new member to our team at the Maryland State Department of Education: Dr. Henry R. Johnson, our new Assistant State Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment.

Concussions Task Force, a State Superintendent-appointed panel of health and athletics officials, which has been meeting since last summer.

Dr. Gary Dix, a neurosurgeon with the Anne Arundel Medical Center and a member of the Task Force, said that the medical community is just beginning to understand concussions and their effect on athletes. When student-athletes are pushed back on the playing field too soon, "we are losing sight of what is important."

Original emergency regulations, approved last July, required that local school systems train each coach in concussion risk and management, including criteria for removal and return to play and recognition of concussion symptoms. In addition, each school system has been required to implement policies that assure athletes and their parents or guardians receive information about the nature and risk of brain injuries.

The emergency regulations also have required a medical assessment if any student athlete is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other brain injury. The athlete cannot be allowed to return to the contest until cleared by a licensed health care provider authorized to provide sports physical examinations for evaluation and return to play.

Traumatic brain injuries in sports have been in the public spotlight, given attention at both the professional and collegiate sports, and State Board members have spent several months working toward strengthened protections for students. The emergency regulations were in place for the start of the 2012-13 school year.

FIVE YEARS AT THE TOP FOR MARYLAND SCHOOLS

The Maryland public school system remains the nation's highest ranked school system for an unprecedented fifth consecutive year, according to an independent national report being released earlier this month.



Education Week, the nation's leading education publication, looked at data in six critical categories over the past five years, and once again found that

In his new position, Dr. Johnson will be responsible for leading the Department's team charged with implementing the new Common Core State Standards, the coming Next Generation Science Standards, and the new social studies framework currently under development. He'll also oversee the assessment programs related to the Maryland curriculum.

Dr. Johnson is a long-time teacher and administrator in Maryland and Virginia public schools. Most recently, he spent 10 years as principal of Northwood High School in Montgomery County. He began his career as a social studies teacher in Norfolk, VA, working in the classroom for 15 years before moving on to administration. Dr. Johnson also has served as an adjunct professor of education, first at Old Dominion University and later at the University of Maryland and Trinity University. Dr. Johnson holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech, a master's in education administration from Old Dominion, and a doctorate in education, also from Virginia Tech.

Welcome, Dr. Johnson!

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Calendar

January 30 – State of the State Address

February 26 – Maryland State Board of Education Meeting



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

News From The Board

January 22, 2013

The Board makes permanent, and adds to, emergency regulations regarding concussion

Governor O'Malley celebrates the new ranking with Anne Arundel county students.

Maryland's state education system ranked at the head of the class.

Maryland's grade of B+ placed at the top of the list in *Education Week's* annual "Quality Counts" tally. Like last year, Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia followed Maryland, with B grades. As has been the case since the report's inception, most states received grades in the C ranges or below.

"From the earliest days of our Administration, job creation and its primary ingredient, education, have topped our agenda. Every year of this Administration, even during the toughest of times, we have invested to make this a reality," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Today we're here to announce that, with better choices, we have built what *Education Week* magazine says is the #1 best public school system in America for the fifth year in a row because of our students, educators and parents who understand that the investments we make in education are investments in the future we all share."

State Superintendent Lillian M. Lowery said the latest rankings serve as fuel for further improvement. The data reflect the strong support education receives throughout Maryland.

"Maryland public schools are so fortunate to have bipartisan support throughout the State," Dr. Lowery said. "Our schools have the benefit of strong support from the Governor, other elected officials, educators, parents, business leaders, and the public at large. This ranking could not be achieved without the support of every partner, and we won't be able to continue our improvement without that broad coalition."

Maryland has continued to build upon its success since gaining the top slot in the nation in 2009. In 2010, Maryland was awarded a portion of the federal government's \$4.3 billion Race to the Top funding, which has helped the State strengthen standards for students and educators, build a new data warehouse, and improve educator evaluation. Last year, Maryland received an additional four-year \$50 million federal grant to help continue its reform efforts in critical early childhood education programs.

Maryland's 2013 ranking in Quality Counts is based on State education policies and student performance that reflect nearly two decades of work to solidify

management, modifies its stance on School Discipline after a round of public comment, and takes a thorough look at the Breakthrough Center. Plus Board Briefs, a Maryland finalist for National Teacher of the Year, and more!

Maryland #1 5th Year in a Row

January 10, 2013

Education Week names Maryland #1 for the fifth year in a row in its 'Quality Counts' survey. Governor Martin O'Malley makes the announcement at Jones Elementary in Anne Arundel County.

News From The Board

December 14, 2012

The Board reacts to the Connecticut school shooting, Maryland launches the School Progress Index, the Board honors Maryland secondary schools' Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year, and also the National Title 1 Distinguished School of the Year.

In the News

Maryland Schools Top Ranking for Fifth Year in a Row

NBC News

State Board Looks to Strengthen Concussion Safety

Baltimore Sun

National High School Graduation Rate at Four Decade High

Washington Post

Maryland Teacher in Running for National Honor

WBAL Television

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the preK-12 curriculum; state accountability and standards; educator effectiveness; and work on school readiness, high school reform, and preparation for college and the workplace.

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Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
MarylandPublicSchools.org
410.767.0600
410.333.6442 (TTY)
1.888.246.0016

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

Stephen Brooks, *Deputy State Superintendent*
Office of Finance

Charlene M. Dukes, Ed.D., *President*
State Board of Education

Martin O'Malley, Governor



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Bill Reinhard and Gail Tucker, *Editors*

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